



18 MAR, 2023

MARKET FORCES

Weekend Herald, Auckland



MARKET

Anna King Shahab takes a trip to a Sunday market for a comparative grocery shopping experience

Why is shopping at a farmers' market so fulfilling? I took a wander through one of my closest, Grey Lynn Farmers' Market, which takes place every Sunday morning.

It's important to acknowledge that having the ability — physically, financially, or timewise — to shop at a farmers' market, regularly or not, is a privilege. For many it's simply not an option.

I'm a bitsy shopper, with the farmers' market an important stop on my never-ending trail. I often question whether I'm foolish, given the amount of precious time I spend sourcing food for my whānau — surely I could simplify my life by doing one big online shop each week?

But I recognise that, for me, there's immense satisfaction and enjoyment in buying food close to its source.

In the case of Grey Lynn, a member of the Farmers' Market Association but a smaller, neighbourhood-style market compared to some of the large examples around the country, that means, by and large, buying food from the people who made it, grew it, or raised it.

That said, market manager Carol Gunn says transparency is key. Sometimes (as with recent

weather events) stallholders are encouraged to stock produce from other farmers in the nationwide network as that strengthens distribution and keeps customers happy.

IT'S A SUSTAINABILITY THING

Shopping here, you're supporting a diverse food network in terms of what is produced, how and by whom — versus putting all our eggs (and everything) in a big basket — and you're supporting zero waste goals.

At Grey Lynn, you don't see much plastic at all. Many of the stalls work a return and reuse system. A reuse station, where you can help yourself to with clean jars with lids, and egg cartons, is at the entrance to the hall — a handy way of avoiding packaging.

IT CONNECTS YOU TO PEOPLE

Whether you're doing your mainstay food shop or just picking up a few extras, farmers' market-shopping connects you to your community. In an urban area like Grey Lynn, where it's fairly easy to go day in, day out, without so much as a hello over the fence, this is a way to make meaningful human contact.

IT CONNECTS YOU TO SEASONS AND REASONS

Visiting throughout the year you get to know

what's in season when, and you'll find the price reflects the availability. If you bring rangatahi with you, they'll soak up valuable knowledge around the food system and how to shop smarter, seasonally. Here, it's easy to notice if there are gaps or shortages and, when you chat to stallholders about why, you get insight into some of the challenges to our food system.

Supermarket shelves have been void of eggs of late and at Grey Lynn, Carl from Nature's Corner also has a reduced supply, but the difference is, he is there to explain why (in his case it goes back to lockdowns meaning reduced sales and a reduced flock, to the stringent consents needed on a new piece of land to increase the flock). But also here I found beautiful red kūmara and flavoursome outdoor tomatoes — scarce at many other retailers — at Edward's stall.

IN MY BASKET

Every shopper at Grey Lynn farmers' market has different goals. One might do the primary weekly shop there (hint: arrive early to hit the larger fruit and veg stalls to get the full selection) while another might cruise around picking up a few interesting-looking things. On this visit, I was aiming to gather key fixings for meals for the week ahead as well as some treats. Rather than being armed with a shopping list I simply bought what looked great, and planned out meals from the haul.

I spent around \$230, which got me the bulk



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From left: Annette & Rufus Carey, That Fruit Shop. Cher & Aihua, Beanstalk. Zane, Piries Butchery. Casaro Italian Cheeses. Leon Narbey, Narbey Olive Oil. George's Garden. PHOTOS / DALLAS PICKERING

FORCES

of the ingredients I used to make meals for the week. While it would be tricky to directly compare prices here and at a big supermarket, I reckon the cost of a similar shop is fairly comparable, but the farmers' market wins on direct-from-farm (often spray-free) freshness and flavour.

- Free-range eggs, Hawke's Bay red-fleshed plums and apricots and avocados from That Fruit Shop stall — ex-Hawke's Bay orchardists Rufus and Annette Carey buy direct from Hawke's Bay orchards (the stonefruit that week were likely to be the very last of the season due to the cyclone, Rufus told me).
- Mixed lettuce leaves, rocket leaves, hot green chilli from Edward Pan's stall Bio GV, grown in West Auckland.
- A kilo of agria potatoes from George's Farm stall, also grown in West Auckland.
- Spring onions and a large daikon from Cher Yu's stall, The Beanstalk.
- A big \$10 punnet of microgreens from Creative Urban Gardens — bonus of a chat with co-owner Sho, a landscape architect by day (he can design and build edible landscapes, by the way — love this). He grows 150 trays of microgreens each week in a vertical set-up that takes up minimal space, uses a small amount of soil, and no sprays or chemicals.
- Rump steak, chicken thigh, and housemade smoked ham from Phill at Pirie's butchery stall.

• Grey Lynn farmers' market 510 Richmond Rd, Grey Lynn. Every Sunday 8.30am–noon. See greylynfarmersmarket.co.nz for a wealth of information on the market including a full list of stallholders and a map of where they're placed.

- Blue cheese and soft goat's cheese from Giovanna at Il Casaro — the dozen or so styles of cheeses there are all made in the North Shore factory, except for the aged parmigiano.
- A 1.5L bottle of Jersey Girls organic milk.
- A jar of vegan cashew cream cheese umami flavour (with miso) from Helena at Sonntag.
- A 250ml bottle of Frantoio olive oil, grown and pressed in Waikato by Leon Narbey, a cinematographer.
- A 500ml bottle of kombucha from Melissa Ly's stall Something Big is Brewing. Melissa took us through a tasting of her many delicious kombucha flavours; to her fermented black tea base she adds fresh fruit and premium ingredients like spirulina and blue chlorophyll.
- Fresh tortilla crisps, hot tomato salsa, nacho queso from Red Hot Kiwi — Yvette makes her salsas with New Zealand garlic and chillies and lovely fine coriander. She also let us in on a regular's secret — her oven-ready chicken enchiladas with salsa verde.
- Zeki's single-serve Turkish flatbreads, and a generous jar of Sicilian and kalamata olives.
- Bread & Butter bakery's sourdough baguette.

AT MY TABLE

Here are some of the meals and snacks I made with the bounty:

- French toast made with sliced sourdough baguette dipped in whisked egg and milk, then sprinkled with cinnamon sugar.
- Smoothies with the plums and milk joined by frozen sliced banana.
- Lunchtime salads with mixed lettuce, rocket, microgreens and generous pinches of goat's cheese or blue cheese, and Narbey Frantoio olive oil dressing.
- Thai-style grilled rump beef salad scattered with microgreens.
- Sourdough baguette topped with cashew cheese and microgreens
- Zeki's pita filled with the smoked ham, rocket leaves, and salad mix for packed lunches.
- Diced chicken thigh and hot green chilli in a weeknight curry.
- Agria jacket potatoes stuffed with spring onion mash and topped with crumbled blue cheese and a little nacho queso.
- Nachos with tortilla chips, a can of black beans cooked up with chorizo spice, topped with nacho queso, hot salsa, guacamole and microgreens.
- Daikon no mimono — thick discs of peeled and turned daikon slow-braised in a soy-mirin-sake broth, served on top of steamed rice with spring onion curls — Japanese comfort food.
- Did I already say microgreens on everything? So much flavour in such a small package.
- Apricot upside-down cake served with Greek yoghurt drizzled with Narbey olive oil and honey. •